

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

Chair: Peter Burling

Vice Chair: Katherine Hersh

Minutes

March 26, 10:00 am

LOB 201

Present: Katherine Hersh, Kerrie Diers, Rep. Mary Allen, Mark Brewer, Mike Izbicki, Rep. Sandra Keans, Michael King, Nancy Larson, Thomas Mahon, Jay Minkarah, Tim Moore, Kit Morgan, Steve Pesci, Rep. Robert Williams, Mike Pillsbury

I. Call to Order – Vice Chair Hersh called the meeting to order at 10:00 am

II. Public Input - None

III. Minutes –

- a. Rep. Allen moved to approve the minutes of January 22, 2010, seconded by Mike Izbicki. The motion carried unanimously.
- b. Tim Moore moved to approve the minutes of February 5, 2010, seconded by Mike Izbicki. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Other Discussion

- a. State Rail Plan – Kit Morgan updated the Authority on the State Rail Plan process. DOT is currently reviewing the scope and list of consultants. There is a short list of firms that will be asked for proposals. It will take about 9 – 15 months to go through the process. Mark Brewer asked if that timeframe would affect our grant applications. Kit Morgan said that the updated rail plan does not need to be in place for FY10 applications. There was an extension of the grace period, so current year grants are exempted from the requirement of an updated rail plan.
- b. Proposed Resolution – Mike Pillsbury provided an overview of a bridge project in Enfield. In 2004, a Commission established the need to address safety and other issues concerning the bridge over Lake Mascoma. One of the solutions was to create a rail trail bridge. The Town would like to see an at-grade crossing while rail trail advocates want the bridge due to safety concerns. Michael King asked what the public sentiment is regarding the issue. Mike Pillsbury stated that there has been a lot of discussion from both trail users and the town. When rail is returned on the line, the bridge will need to be replaced. Rep. Keans stated that

a short term fix would be the at-grade crossing. Steve Pesci said that he felt that there is a lack of information about this project. The bigger picture is that this is a rail corridor and will be put back into use.

Kathy Hersh stated that she was on the TE committee when the State purchased the rail corridors and the trail component will need to be figured into the project when rail is reintroduced. Steve Pesci recommended that the issue should be clarified with the Town in an MOU. Nancy Larson said that there is not enough information to take a vote today. We need to have more specifics about the project and how this section fits into the overall larger project. Mike Pillsbury stated that the bridge will be closed if the work is not completed.

Steve Schneider from the Town of Enfield was invited to summarize the Town's position. Mr. Schneider clarified that the rail bridge is part of a bigger Shaker Bridge Project. This has been an ongoing discussion over the past few years. The bridge would be approximately \$1 million which is a lot for a rail trail bridge, and whatever work is done now would have to be redone if the rail is reintroduced. The current bridge cuts off part of the Village and needs to be replaced. The rail trail is an important part of the community, but an at-grade crossing is adequate and in keeping with the other at-grade crossings on the trail.

Peter Burling introduced the resolution to deal with the issue of the perception of the State supporting rail but at the same time removing rail infrastructure. This sends the wrong message.

Mike Izbicki said that we need to have more information on the project. Michael King disagreed with the resolution. If we want to have a role in this, we need to attend the public hearings and a resolution is not the right way to track rail to trail projects. Jay Minkarah stated that it doesn't appear to make a difference to the rail project if there is a bridge or at grade crossing so we should defer to the community's recommendation. Mark Brewer asked if this issue is time-sensitive. Mike Pillsbury said that it is. In addition, he is concerned about the resolution and how the Authority communicates with the DOT. This goes to the MOU that we will discuss today.

Tim Moore moved to defer action on the resolution and consider a letter to NH DOT on this issue. The motion was seconded by Rep. Allen.

After discussion, the motion was amended to table the resolution. The motion carried with one vote opposed.

Kathy Hersh suggested that a subcommittee form to take a closer look at the issues and make a recommendation prior to the next meeting. Nancy Larson, Tim Moore, Tom Mahon volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

- c. Draft MOU – Kathy Hersh explained that this draft MOU is for discussion purposes and asked for comments. Michael King asked if we needed to have broader language because the MOU deals with the specific project. Mike Pillsbury said that there is a desire to address this specific project and it could serve as a template for a broader MOU. Mike Izbicki stated

that his understanding was that the RSA required a broad MOU and not a project by project basis. We need to also address the issue of the State Rail Plan.

Steve Pesci agreed stating that we need to have a broad MOU. This is an interim MOU. Kathy Hersh stated that this is a great start that is written to address the immediate need. Tim Moore suggested that we replace “project” with “passenger rail” to start. Kit Morgan said that the MOU should be consistent with the RSA and not go beyond the scope of authority for the NHRTA.

The next steps are that Executive Committee should meet to gather comments and draft another version.

- d. Special election to replace Christine Walker on the Executive Committee – Kathy Hersh asked for nominations for Executive Committee to replace Christine Walker.

Kerrie Diers made a motion to elect Jay Minkarah to the Executive Committee. The motion was seconded by Mark Brewer. The motion carried unanimously.

- e. Other

- i. **Tim Moore made a motion to elect the current slate of officers at the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Rep. Allen. The motion carried unanimously.**
- ii. Rep. Keans alerted the authority to HB 2010 that has a provision that until roads are complete, no funds should be spent on rail projects. This passed the House on Wednesday. Kathy Hersh asked the Authority if it was comfortable with the Executive Committee addressing this issue. The Authority agreed.

V. Committee Updates

- a. Logo Committee – Nancy Larson stated that letters had been sent to all contestants. The electronic version of the logo is available. We need to pick a meeting to officially unveil the logo and invite Timothy Pipp to attend. She will invite him to attend the April 23 meeting.

Mike Izbicki said that we need to determine what we need for business cards, letterhead, printing, etc. Nancy created a letterhead and used the NHDOT address.

- b. NHCC Funding Committee – No changes to report.

VI. NH Capitol Corridor Updates

- a. Status of Grant Application – Mike Izbicki summarized the outcome a meeting with Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Commissioner Campbell, Nashua Mayor Donnalee Lozeau, and NHRTA Chair Peter Burling. There will be an FRA planning grant that will be made available at the end of March with the intent that an award will be made by June 30. FRA staff has been assigned to work with NH to make sure we have a complete application.

Secretary LaHood stated that combining both FRA and FTA funding was consistent with the Livable Communities Initiative and would be possible. The idea would be to fund commuter rail to Manchester-Boston Regional Airport and intercity rail to Concord. Kathy Hersh is pursuing this with Congressman Hodes' office to receive confirmation that we can do this. Kit Morgan said that he set up a conference call with FRA and FTA to clarify this point. Mike Pillsbury suggested we get together to ensure that we are not duplicating efforts. Kathy Hersh said that we should be part of the discussion and we need to make sure we are coordinating efforts.

- b. Economic Impact Study – Mike Izbicki stated that the study is not finalized yet. We should be receiving the final white paper soon.
- c. Plaistow MBTA – Tim Moore provided an update of the project. They have met with MBTA and Kit Morgan. The CFO of MBTA is on board with the project and supports the CMAQ application that the Town is putting together. The RPC was successful in getting an agreement that they could use the air quality benefit from MA. The CMAQ presentations will be in late July/early August and if successful, it could be 2 years to opening day.

Steve Pesci made a motion that the NHRTA submit a letter of support for the Plaistow CMAQ application, which was seconded by Rep. Allen. The motion carried unanimously.

Tim Moore will draft a letter and send to Kathy Hersh to finalize.

Steve Pesci made a motion that the NHRTA submit a letter of support for the Exeter CMAQ application, which was seconded by Tom Mahon. The motion carried unanimously.

Steve Pesci will work with RPC to draft a letter and send to Kathy to finalize.

- d. Other – Mark Brewer explained that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce has a draft resolution to support rail planning.

Mike Izbicki made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Tom Mahon. The motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerrie Diers, NHRTA Secretary